

LOOMIS - SB 374

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The matter of SB 374, a bill requiring mental health evaluations of only children who attend public school or are homeschooled, is one of great importance to all families in the state of CT. Headlines of the horrors of mass shootings such as the one in Newtown, Virginia Tech, and Columbine and how these acts were committed by ill individuals permeate the airwaves and strike at the heart of each parent. So too do the stories of children who commit suicide in reaction to being bullied in perpetuity.

As parents we sign on for certain risks – ones in which we know we'll forever be concerned over the welfare of our children and, hopefully, do what we can to make them safe until they're at an age where they might make decisions on their own. When we impart upon this journey of parenthood the consideration of ill individuals and their actions seldom take front seat in our streams of consciousness despite our subconscious actions taken to protect them from the individuals we may know who fit this description. One might say this is why we have our children in car seats and when they're older encourage them to wear seat belts- to keep them safe should an accident occur. At no point in these scenarios do we treat our children as the villains as this bill suggests we do.

By treating them this way, as villains - or as potential villains- we are not encouraging the best of who they are but instead asserting exactly the opposite. That someday they might seek to kill other human beings; friends, family, classmates... That in a field rife with differing opinions about what a predictor of such behavior might be as well as the definition of terms its self someone who does not know them can predict how they will be in five, ten, fifteen years. That this prediction carries with it a label and these children, victimized by this label, should submit to this assumption and somehow make sure they do not live up/down to it. That they should live in fear of themselves and/or their peers. After all, they just might be killers.

Even considering them as villains do we, as citizens of CT, gain anything by this? Do we prevent any manner of violent crime from being committed? Given how definitions and criteria for diagnosis have morphed over the years there seems to be no way to ensure this is the case.

The diagnosis of adolescent children is rife with subjectivity and the use of a malevolent label does not serve any other purpose than to potentially criminalize a child before any crime has been committed. No matter how far the science of psychology has come there is no definitive way of conclusively identifying a criminal before they become one. It simply makes the act of supposition enough to make one into a criminal with nothing but hearsay and opinion to be used in declaring guilt.

To be the first to victimize the limited population of children in the vein of trying to ensure they won't be “worse” victims later still creates victims. Our children deserve better than this. Allow their parents and those taking part in the care of each child to make the decisions they need regarding them. Those who know them best, the professionals who interact with them regularly

and with permission of the parent, are in the best position to ensure each child gets the care they need while getting the support required to hopefully subvert victimization. Telling them they are “wrong” will only encourage just that as the need of a child to please seems to me to be paramount above all others. Let us encourage them with love, with the idea they are inherently good, and that if they need help they have it.

Vote no on this bill. Our children deserve it.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

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